

Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers (DAggER)

Training shelter dogs to be family dogs

Tag Words: Rutgers, University, Dog, Aggression, Training, Program, Behavior Modification, Professional Trainer, Animal Science, Experienced Base Credit, Issues in Animal Science

Authors: Elyse Conway, Sarah Lipari, Casey Macalush, Nicole Rivas with Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D.

Summary

There are millions of animals that are surrendered to shelters every year. Of the number of dogs that enter these shelters, about 60% of them will be euthanized. DAggER- The Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers University training program is an organization that wants to give animals in shelters a second chance in hopes to reduce the number of animals euthanized each year.

Many dogs that are surrendered to shelters for aggressive behavior can be trained appropriately to live happily in a home as a wonderful family companion. The goal of The Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers is to target aggressive shelter dogs, and train them to be loyal, safe pets through professional training and student participation. DAggER service project is to promote a training program through Rutgers University to promote the adoption of aggressive dogs and re-train animals so they can live comfortably in a good home. We believe that all shelter dogs can be trained to be family dogs.

Video Link

DAGGER- Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc9B-dxO044>

The Issue: Dog Aggression

EC and CM

According to the ASPCA, 5-7 million animals enter shelters every year. 3-4 million of those animals are euthanized every year due to lack of homes. Of the number of dogs that enter shelters, a huge 60% of them will be destroyed. These statistics of animals in shelters are extremely large and statistics show that a majority of animals surrendered to shelters is due to behavioral issues. Certain breeds considered to be “aggressive” in nature are a majority of these animals. While some breeds may be known to be more aggressive, proper training of the animal throughout their life as well as owner education could help to manage and prevent behavior issues. With proper training it is believed that any animal no matter the size, breed or nature, could be a great well managed pet with proper training.

Aggression can be a wide variety of behaviors in which a dog exhibits for a magnitude of reasons according to the ASPCA. Risk factors of aggression include age, severity of aggression, predictability, targets in which cause the animal to react, triggers or circumstances that cause the animal to elicit an aggressive behavior and the ease of motivating the dog to become retrained. These factors of retraining a companion animal must be taken into consideration for each individual case. Behavior modification is a useful tool for animals who elicit aggressive responses. It is believed that while an animal cannot be “cured” from an aggressive type, the animal can be retrained, the frequency of dangerous responses can be reduced and aggression can sometimes be completely eliminated from an animal’s natural response to stimuli.

Training an animal early in life minimizes the chances of the animal having behavioral problems. Unfortunately, the reality is that most dogs in shelters were not given a fair chance to be raised properly and developed aggression due to many reasons. There are many types of aggression; animals in shelters usually have fear, food, dominance and territorial aggression due to the not so glorified lifestyle they have had to live growing up in shelters. These animals are generally thought of as unadoptable due to the fact that they pose a danger to potential owners because of their behavior and in most cases, are euthanized.

Studies have found that the relationship between the new owner and the shelter dog is very important due to the high rates of relinquishment of adopted shelter dogs back into shelters. It has also been found that shelters that offer classes for new owners to train their new pet reduces the chances that the new owners will relinquish the shelter dog back to the shelter (Halter et. al. 382).

Relationship between Aggressor and Training Methods

At the Institut Fure Tierhygiene in Germany aggressive conflicts and the factors that affected them were studied. The study was conducted over one year of 206 dog owners who had been involved in dog aggression related injuries found that the dog’s relationship with the owner, the lack of social interactions with con-specifics, training methods and how important training was to the owner affected aggressive behavior. As shown in Figure 1, the study showed that animals that were from breeders were more likely to be the aggressor in an attack versus dogs from animal shelters. These results show that the history of where the animal comes from may have

an effect on aggressive behavior but shelter dogs are not more likely to be aggressive due to their history of location.

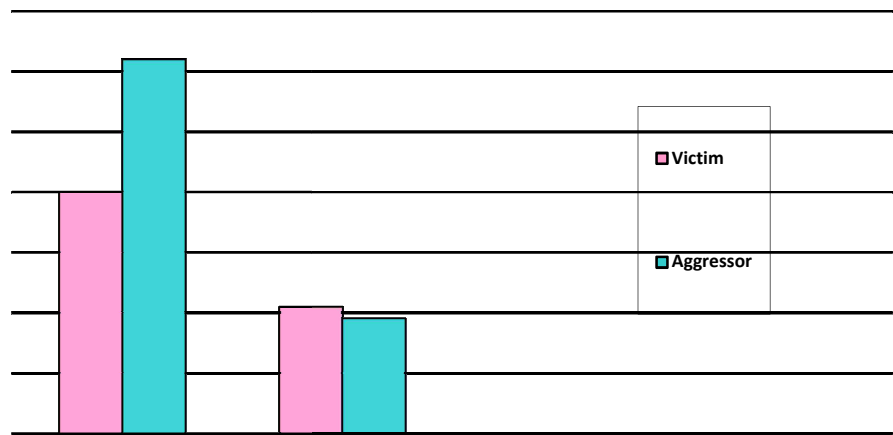


Figure 1-Victim and Aggressor Frequencies

Figure 1 shows the origin of dogs in the study that were either victims or aggressors in a canine attack. The results show that dogs from breeders were both more likely to be the aggressor in an attack as well as the victim.

The study also discussed canine aggressive conflicts amongst dogs and were studied and found to be closely related to the training methods in which the dog learned. Dogs that were trained using clear commands, loud voices and warning gestures were less likely to attack than those dogs trained using hitting or shaking. As shown in Figure 2, the results of the survey showed that aggressive behaviors towards the canine reflected the relative aggressive behavior in dogs. Dogs trained using occasional hitting, shaking and pulling off were more likely to be the aggressor in an attack.

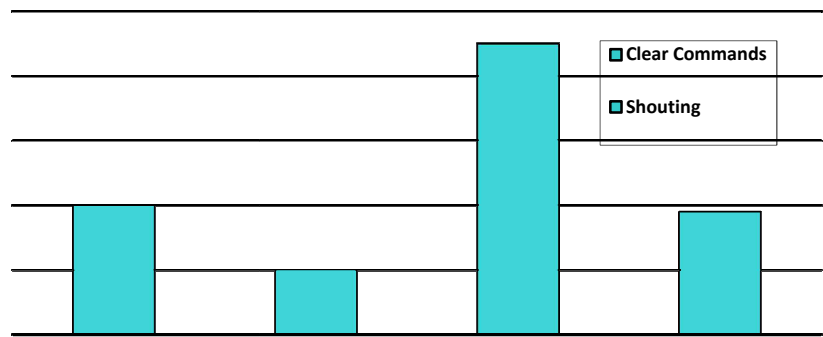


Figure 2- Relationship between Training Methods and Aggression

Figure 2 shows the relationship between training methods and the likelihood of an aggressive attack. Results show that aggressive behavior towards a canine is more likely to result in aggressive behavior from the dog.

Training Techniques

“Traditional training techniques have used mainly aversive stimuli, either in the form of positive punishment (application of an aversive stimulus in response to an undesirable behavior) or a negative reinforcement (removal of an aversive stimulus leading to an increase in the performance of a desirable behavior). The use of aversive stimuli in training may have negative welfare implications...it has been found to be related to aggression towards other dogs (Bradshaw et. al. 63).”

In a study conducted by the Anthrozoology Institute at the University of Bristol, a questionnaire of 364 dog owners were studied to examine the effectiveness of different dog training strategies. The training techniques were placed into three categories, punishment; physical or vocal, reward; play, food or praise, and miscellaneous; redirection of behavior or ignoring the behavior. The results of the study showed that the frequency of punishment as a training technique was related to problematic behaviors. The results showed that there is a link between positive reinforcement of good behaviors as a more effective way of training, and that punishment training methods led to increased aggression and fear related behavior problems.

Effective amount of Training Time

In 2007, a study conducted using laboratory beagles at the University of Copenhagen by I. Meyer and J. Ladewig found that training a dog multiple times a week may not be as effective as training once a week in order to complete a certain behavior. Two groups of randomly chosen lab dogs were used, group one was trained to complete a behavior during once weekly training sessions with the same trainer. The second group was trained to complete that task five times a week. The results of the study proved that consistent once weekly training of a dog is sufficient enough to obtain a desired trained behavioral response from a dog. The results showed that the dogs trained once a week required less weeks of training than those who were trained five times a week.

Training Sessions to Achieve Desired Behavior

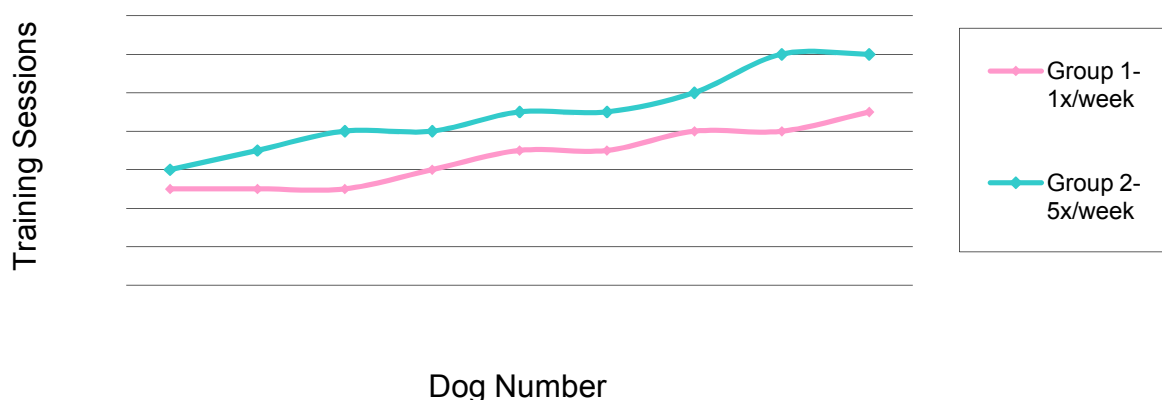


Figure 3- Training Sessions a Week Required to Achieve a Desired Behavior

The above figure shows the relationship between the 9 dogs in the 2 different groups in the experiment and the relative number of sessions needed for each of the animals in the groups to learn the desired behaviors. Results show that the dogs that were trained once weekly needed

fewer lessons to learn the behavior. Once a week training sessions are a valuable way for dogs to learn behaviors.

Only a few years ago, the problem of overpopulation in the dog world was far from under control, but in more recent times, shelters, breeders, and the general public have been able to get a better handle on the number of unwanted dogs in the world. When the issue was the number of homeless dogs in the world, many shelters took in only the dogs that they knew had a good chance of being adopted out to new homes. Any dog that had a behavioral problem of any kind was quickly euthanized to leave space for a dog that had a better chance at finding a new home. Luckily, this is not the case anymore. Many shelters are finding that they have more space available and more time to devote to problematic dogs that walk through their doors. There are many different kinds of behavioral problems that a dog can come to a shelter with, or that they can obtain from being in the shelter situation, the most common of which is aggression. Either way, these dogs are much less likely to be adopted out to a new family because of their issues. The “issues” of shelter dogs can be divided into four types 1) behavior problems correlated with relinquishment to an animal shelter (the reason the dog was given up by its original owner) 2) “Adoption Busters” which are issues that cause dogs to be passed up by potential adopters 3) separation anxiety and 4) problems caused by the kennel/ shelter environment itself.

Our training program that will be presented later in this paper is trying to eliminate the “adoption buster” category completely. Once these dogs wind up in a shelter they are overlooked by potential adopters because of aggression issues towards people, or towards other dogs, “mouthiness” and biting issues, shyness and fear aggression related issues, and barrier-related aggression which is caused most often by the kennel situation itself (issue type 4).

A lot of the aggression issues that people find once they take a shelter dog home probably stemmed from the situation the dog was in when it was inside the shelter. Many shelters unknowingly provoke aggressive behaviors in dogs because of the design and set-up of the kennels themselves. Dogs learn almost all of the information they can about a human or another dog from smelling and investigating them. Many times, shelters have kennels where the dogs are leashed and cannot properly investigate one another or a person that passes by. Some other shelters may have kennels where the dogs can see through a pane of glass, but cannot smell one another or people that walk by, and many shelters have kennels that will only hold one dog at time, therefore not letting them investigate one another at all. These dogs become frustrated with the fact that despite repeated attempts to get to smell a person or another dog nearby, they are unable to do so. The constant frustration of seeing other dogs and people and not being able to investigate them can lead to anger and aggression problems for the dog. Some dogs may even begin to lunge at people or other animals when they are not leashed or behind chain link fences because they want to finally be able to smell or touch them. This behavior then causes shelter employees to limit the dog’s social interactions more because of the way they behaved, and this in turn feeds into the issue and continues the vicious cycle of the dog being frustrated because it cannot have social contact. Within a very short amount of time, through classical conditioning, the site of people and other dogs will trigger this sense of frustration and lead to aggressive behavior. This is an issue which scares off many people and causes them not to want to adopt a dog even though this aggression is something that can be corrected, and avoided all together in the first place.

Some issues of aggression are genetic, and the shelter situation may bring these behaviors out more quickly in these dogs than in others that are not in a shelter. One way to help determine when or if these issues will come out in a dog's personality once they are adopted is to put them through a series of behavioral tests. These tests allow the potential owner and shelter employees to see what scenarios may trigger a negative response from the dog. Shelters and potential adopters can perform most of these tests prior to adopting a dog to see if they will exhibit aggressive behavior in the form of fear aggression, dominance aggression, dog aggression, or aggression in any other form. These tests include the ATTS temperament test ®, Puppy Aptitude test (for younger dogs), SAFER test ®, Sue Sternberg's test, and the Guide Dog and Working Dog tests. Depending on the age of the dog in the shelter, and its intended purpose (as a pet, show, or working dog) one can determine the personality of a dog and what potential triggers, if any, would cause a dog to elicit a negative response in the form of aggression. The tests' predictions were proven to be 75% accurate when used along with the opinions of the staff at the shelters in which they were tested. If these tests were used in shelters, there would be a greater chance of potential adopters knowing what to expect when they brought home an adopted dog, and less chance of the owner returning the dog to the shelter. In 90% of all cases where dogs are returned to an animal shelter after being taken to their new home, it is because of aggression and/or behavioral issues that the owners were not aware of at the time that they adopted the dog. If these tests showed that a dog was more than likely going to be aggressive in the home toward someone or another animal, the shelter or the potential adopter would be able to prepare to get the proper training to eradicate this behavior. As you will read later in this paper, we are proposing a program that will be able to train a shelter dog to be a family dog and eliminate any issues of aggression.

SL and NR

<http://www.parade.com/news/2010/08/15-can-you-teach-a-bad-dog-new-tricks.html>

Dog aggression sparked in the nation when Michael Vick was convicted of animal abuse by running a dog fighting ring. Pit bulls, the breed primarily used for dog fighting, were highlighted as an unfixable, aggressive dog. This media driven story had a major affect on the nation. For example, Miami and Denver has banned the breed due to their negative reputation. Parade Magazine recently focused on the topic of dog aggression when they put a light on the 51 pit bulls recovered from Michael Vick's property for dog fighting. They emphasize that aggression can be reversed when in the hands of proper trainers. A majority of Michael Vick's dogs were rehabilitated from their aggressive ways after proper training and most were adopted to great homes. Parade focuses on one of Vick's dogs, Jonny, and his rehabilitation success. "Dogs raised like Vick's react excessively to external stimuli. If they see a bird they want to chase, they chase it. Learning even the simplest command forces them to tune into their internal monitor, especially when the command is paired with rewards such as food or affection. Suddenly the dog has to make a choice. "Do I do what I want or wait and do what has been asked? Good things happen to me when I wait rather than simply following my impulses." Teaching a dog like Jonny to sit is essentially retraining the way he thinks, according to Dr. Randy Lockwood, the ASPCA's senior vice president for anticruelty initiatives" (Gorant, 2010).

Parade Magazine showed the successful rehabilitation of these once aggressive pit bulls, disproving the country's beliefs. If these once to be thought genetically engineered aggressive dogs could be mended, then any other breed could be, as well.

Parade also explains how the dogs need individual treatment as opposed to training in the group as a whole. “Rather than be condemned as a whole, the dogs should be individually assessed and treated—and this has turned out to be one of the great lessons of the Bad Newz dogs. Generalizations and preconceptions are as unhelpful and counterproductive for pit bulls as they are for people” (Gorant, 2010). All dogs are different so the training needs to be fitted to the specific reactions of the dog.

The last issue that Parade focuses on is the importance of training over euthanasia. Many dogs are returned to shelters for aggressive behavior. In addition, most shelters do not have training in their facility. For these animals, most are euthanized because they believe they are un-adoptable pets. However, this article shows that with proper one-on-one training, aggression can be eliminated in the animal, therefore allowing the animal to have the chance to get adopted. <http://www.atlantadogtrainer.com/dogaggressionmanagement.html> :

Aggression in the dog stems from when the canine views itself as the alpha dog and looks down upon other dogs, adults, children, etc. Many training programs, including Atlanta Dog Training Program focus on re-establishing dominance in the owner; therefore the dog looks to please the owner, instead of fighting against the owner and proving its own dominance. They also emphasize that they do not use negative reinforcement, because it has the possibility of triggering their aggressive tendencies over again.

Atlanta Dog Training explains the details of their training program that provides effective results. “Dog Aggression Management courses start with 6 one-hour private sessions for \$425... One hour sessions are \$75. The Dog Aggression Management Course includes six sessions of canine aggression management, behavior modification, socialization to dogs, children and adults, and our dog obedience training curriculum as well as reversal of hierarchy to reestablish you as the Alpha” (Atlanta Dog Trainer). <http://www.dogtrainingclassroom.com/aggressive-dog-training.html> :

Dog Training Classroom explains the key signs of dog aggression, to know whether your dog requires training or not. They explain that dog aggression is “characterized by excessive snarling, teeth showing, barking and possibly biting toward either his or her guardian, another person, or towards another dog” (Dog Training Classroom). If these actions are acted out by the dog it is necessary to take pre-cautions in the household and seek training immediately. Dogs that show this type of aggression have the tendency to act out at certain family members, other animals, etc.

They also explain the causes of dog aggression and how it stems from environmental cues. “The dog’s owner behavior, attitude and the wrong choice of training methods like physical violence, constant reprimands, teasing or ignorance can lead to the development of aggressiveness in a dog. Dogs also tend to develop this undesirable behavior if they are consistently chained, underfed or excessively punished” (Dog Training Classroom). This explains why dogs that are used in dog fighting result in aggressive behaviors and require training in order to be rehabilitated. Dog aggression is in the hands of the owner and with proper training these behaviors can be remedied. Dog Training Classroom also explains that these behaviors have the potential to be learned from other canines. Therefore, these behaviors can be picked up from other dogs present

in their life. In addition, if there is a dog that has pups and the parent dog has aggressive behaviors, it is possible that the offspring have the potential to be aggressive, as well. It is important to eliminate these behaviors so that the dog is able to find a good home, and it is important that future pups do not pick up these behaviors as well for the same reason.

Already aggressive dogs have a tendency to fear the unknown. This is why sometimes aggressive dogs will act out towards children or even other non-aggressive animals. It is important to train these animals before they harm those that are innocent.

While an aggressive dog is undergoing training, it is important to always have the dog leashed and controlled. With a history like aggression, it is important to avoid introductions with other unknown dogs for this reason. If there must be such contact, the dog should be controlled and introduced very slowly with reinforcement to follow the reactions of the dog.

Dog Training Classroom also explains that in aggressive dogs, usually they give a warning sign before acting out. “Subtle “back off” signs include the dog freezing in place, a hard stare from the eyes, large eyes, yawning, whining, panting, ears pinned to the head and a stiff body.” They explain that it is important that they show these warning signs because it gives others the hint to back off before things get worse. They explain that it is important *not* to punish this behavior because if so, the dog may have the potential to just bite without warning in the future.

It is also important to not punish the aggressive behavior, but reward the correct behavior. Punishment has a negative connotation and you do not want to fight fire with fire. If you punish the aggressive behavior, the dog may in turn react with even more aggression, defeating the purpose of the training. “When an animal is tense, nervous, or afraid, adding the element of additional fear will only intensify those emotions” (Dog Training Classroom).

With a truly aggressive dog, it is important for the training to be in the hands of professionals. If someone other than a professional trains the dog, they risk the chance of using the wrong training methods and also risk the chance of getting harmed in the mean time. The trainer knows the proper ways to train an unsafe dog with the safest approaches to make sure that the owner, the trainer, and the dog itself does not get harmed.

It is important to train puppies as well, regardless if the animal is aggressive or not. It is a preventative measure in order to avoid any possible future aggression. “Many experts believe that the critical socialization period for puppies is from birth until 6 months of age” (Dog Training Classroom). If socialization is done within this time frame, it decreases the chances of the dog from becoming aggressive in the future.

Dog Training Classroom also highlights the use of counter conditioning in aggressive dogs. First, they find out what exactly is triggering the behavior, may it be dogs, food, the leash, etc. When the trainers understand what is causing the negative behaviors, they will use those triggers to associate it with a positive experience. For example, if the dog growls with the present of a leash, they will be given a treat every time the leash comes in contact with the dog. After a while, the dog will be de-sensitized to the leash and associate it with a good experience. Therefore, counter conditioning fully eliminates the negative behavior.

Dog aggression is a serious behavior issue that is not breed specific and that should be addressed as early as possible. Types of aggressive dog behavior are not more prominent in any one breed over another. "About 0.1 percent of dogs in every breed show signs of aggressive behavior" (Dog Problem Solutions). Most instances of aggression stem from traumatic experiences or mistreatment in a dog's past. They can also develop from a lack of training especially at a young age. However unfortunately, types of aggressive behavior in certain breeds of dogs seem to make the news more often and the public therefore assumes they are more common to that breed. It is important to realize that any dog showing signs of aggressive dog behavior needs to be trained out of those behaviors.

There are numerous signs of aggression a dog can display such as growling, snarling, curling lips, and biting. However, other common dog behaviors like mounting people, lunging, blocking your path, and barking can also be types of aggression. However, because these behaviors are not as directly aggressive toward people, dog owners tend to dismiss them and they have the tendency to escalate.

http://www.dogproblemsolutions.com/types_aggressive_dog_behavior.php

Even with successful treatment, however, there is no guarantee that the aggressive behavior will not return. In most cases, the frequency and severity of aggressive behavior can be reduced but the aggressive behavior cannot be eliminated completely. The best that may be hoped for is to reduce the probability of aggression.

Dog aggression can be divided into several categories dominance aggression, fear aggression, territorial aggression, redirected aggression, possessive/food aggression, pain aggression, and maternal aggression.

Dominance aggression

Dogs are pack animals, so they can often try to establish themselves as the alpha dog in the group. Herding dogs may even try to establish dominance over small children by "herding them" which may involve small nips at their ankles. Some male dogs may try to establish dominance by trying to mount members of the family. One of the more common reasons for dogs jumping, lunging, blocking your path, or mounting is that the dog is trying to establish its dominance within the group dynamic. Dogs display aggression in a variety of circumstances. The main link between these events is the dog's attempt to control situations involving people. Typical provocative situations include:

- Disturbing a dog while it is sleeping
- Pulling a dog's leash to correct it
- Reaching over a dog's head to attach a leash
- Grooming
- Staring
- Hugging
- Handling a dog's muzzle or face
- Conducting restraint exercises
- Administering physical punishment.

Targets of the aggression may include family members or a dog may be aggressive solely to strangers only. Some family members may be targeted over others. Some dogs may specifically

target children. This may be due to a child's stature because children are at the same eye level of a dog they may unintentionally stare which is perceived by dogs as a threat. A more passive family member may be also be victimized more often than someone who is firm with the dog because the dog realizes who it can push around. "Conversely, some dominantly aggressive dogs know they can victimize compliant people so they leave them alone and challenge the more forceful family members instead" (Hilltop Animal Hospital). Some dogs are aggressive only during periods of commotion that distresses them.

Canine dominance aggression typically develops at social maturity, which usually occurs between 18 and 36 months of age. Although most dominantly aggressive dogs are male, this condition can occur in females, often at a young age (8 weeks to 8 months). The fact that dominance aggression usually occurs at social maturity suggests that owners don't cause this problem. (Hilltop Animal Hospital)

Ways to help fix this type of dominance aggression would be to alter triggers in your home that lead to outbursts of aggression. For instance, if a dog growls when you approach it on the sofa you would benefit from denying the dog access to it. If a specific adult family member is being dominated by the dog, have them become the sole provider and care giver. During this period the other family members should ignore the dog. Dogs do not dominate people on whom they must rely on.

Always give rewards when the dog show signs of submission. These signs include laying their ears back on their heads, rolling over, sitting, avoiding eye contact and approaching with their heads lowered. Once a dog is displaying some of these activities it is possible to begin slowly counter conditioning the dog to be submissive. This is done by getting the dog to allow you to handle its paws, hold it in a sitting or laying position and holding its head still. Praise and food treats, very important positive reinforcement techniques, should be administered when the dog cooperates. After some progress has been made the length of the training session should be gradually increased.

In some cases, dogs that are severely dominant aggressive often stubbornly resist change to their status in the family. Professional dog trainers can attempt to modify your dog's behavior but they are not always successful or they may only be moderately successful. In these situations finding another home for this animal may be the best alternative. A new home environment will allow for a new start and for the training techniques to be to work.

Fear Aggression

Another reason for aggressive dog behavior is fear. A fearful dog's first response will usually be to put its tail between its legs, pull its ears back, and look away, or it will even run. However, if a dog feels cornered, it may lash out with growling, snarling, and even biting. It is important for your dog to feel safe, but there are many ways to condition your dog to lower this fear response.

Some fear biting dogs were genetically born shy. It is highly unusual for a shy puppy to be born from gregarious, confident parents. One needs to do everything possible to build up these dogs sense of confidence. Do this with verbal praise, petting and treats; an over stressed dog will not take food. In order to avoid the chance of anyone getting bitten this process should be started

with a muzzled dog. It is best to expose a fearful dog to as many new people and situations as possible, slowly. It is important to keep the leash short, stay calm, and feel confident, you must lead by example. Obedience training is very helpful as well. Obedience training will help build confidence and foster positive communication. In some cases medication may help calm the dog if training is not enough.

Territorial Aggression

Fiercely guarding their home is a common instinctual characteristic of dogs. Dogs have an innate need to dominate their own territory. As puppies grow to dogs they begin to regard the yard, the home, and the car as their personal property. Territorial aggression leads to dogs lashing out and potentially biting any newcomer to their home environment. In a mild form, dogs bark to intimidate intruders. The barking is also intended to alert other pack members who can join in and help defend the "pack's territory", your home. If the intruder is not intimidated, warnings may escalate to include hostile posturing and lunging. This may then escalate and an attack may ensue.

In order to control a territorial dog it is important to establish who, in fact, the leader of the pack is. This is the first step in working towards having a more obedient dog. The next step in the process of training is to enlist some newcomers to help by having them approach the house and rewarding the dog with some treats as they approach, if the dog stays calm. Engage the dog in regular daily obedience training sessions to sharpen his response to one-word voice commands and increase owner leadership. One to two 5-minute sessions per day are usually sufficient. Employ a Gentle Leader® head halter to exert the optimal control of the dog in aggression-inducing situations. The head halter gently, but firmly, establishes owners' leadership and control of their dog, as well as providing visitor safety. "Head halters send a biological signal of the owner's leadership by exerting gentle pressure around the muzzle ("maternal point") and at the nape of the neck ("leader point")" (PetPlace.com) This will allow the dog to defer their aggressive tendencies so that they can be introduced to people under pleasant circumstances and be rewarded for remaining calm.

Counterconditioning could also be used; it interrupts unwanted behavior by training the dog to respond to a command or activity in order to refocus its attention. This technique is most effective when owners can identify and predict the situations that trigger the dogs territorial response.

For dogs that do not readily respond to food or play, it is helpful to train the dog to relax on command by responding to verbal and visual cues from the owner. Under non-stressful conditions, owners should teach the dog to sit and watch them in order to receive praise or a food treat. The command "watch me," should be used. To train this command say the command watch me and move your finger towards your face if the dog responds by paying attention in a relaxed and focused manner, reward him with a small food treat or praise. Perform this relaxation exercise daily for 5 days. Each day, increase the amount of time that the dog must pay attention, in a relaxed pose, before they receive a reward. By the end of the fifth day, the dog should be able to remain focused for 25-30 seconds no matter what the distraction. At this stage, whenever owners sense that their dog is about to engage in the unwanted behavior, they can use this

counterconditioning technique to interrupt the behavior before it escalates. It is important to practice this exercise on a periodic basis to ensure its effectiveness when it is needed.

<http://www.petplace.com/dogs/territorial-aggression-toward-people/page2.aspx>

Redirected Aggression

Redirected aggression occurs when a dog that is aggressively motivated redirects the aggression from one source to another. For example, a dog that is barking at the door may redirect his aggression onto an owner that is pulling him back. Dominant dogs often redirect onto subordinates.

Treating aggressive behavior may involve a combination of behavior modification techniques (habituation, counter-conditioning and desensitization), drug therapy, surgery (such as neutering/spaying), avoidance and management (such as leash or head halter) can also be used. Each case is unique, and the success of treatment varies depending on the diagnosis and in accord with your capability, motivation and schedule. Once you assert yourself as the dominant pack member, gaining control over the dog becomes much easier.

Possessive/Food Aggression

Food aggression is a potentially dangerous behavior that occurs when your dog becomes territorial regarding its food dish or any other source of food. Aggressive behavior can be shown in growling, snapping, or even biting another dog or human who attempts to go near the food bowl. Since any form of aggression in a dog is unsafe, this behavior should be immediately addressed and modified.

If your dog is showing signs of food aggression the first step to treating this behavior is to move the area which your dog is fed. If you have more than one dog in your home, completely separate the two animals during feeding time. Many dog owners choose to leave food available to their dogs throughout the day. However, if your dog is experiencing food aggression, this practice should be stopped and your dog should be fed on a schedule.

Your dog needs to recognize you as the one who provides food and sees you above him on the pecking order of your home. Once this order is recognized, your dog will be less likely to display aggression towards you when you approach his/her food dish. To establish this order, let your dog know immediately that you can provide him with food if he acts properly, and you can take the food away when improper behavior is shown. This also goes with treats because dogs often show aggression over food items that are given as treats. This method will allow the dog to make the connection between proper behavior and its ability to eat. It may be necessary to maintain a feeding schedule or even keep your dogs separated while eating so they do not revert back to their aggressive behaviors.

Pain Aggression

Pain aggression stems from a painful experience in the past and chronic painful conditions. In many cases a dog will bite because they feel that they are going to be forced them to do something which will be painful to them. Pain induced aggression can be a serious problem but as long as care is taken to keep them pain free this behavior can be significantly reduced. If a painful task needs to be done precautionary measures should be used, such as muzzling. Just like

people, dogs have varying degrees of pain tolerance. Some dogs are genetically pain sensitive in specific areas of their bodies. This can cause a problem during grooming. And some aggressive behaviors are involuntary reactions to injuries or illness like hip dysplasia, arthritis, skin disorders and ear problems. The treatment would then be to concentrate on the "management" of the behavior rather than an absolute cure.

Maternal Aggression

Maternal aggression is directed toward people or other animals that approach a female dog with her puppies. When these females go through a pseudopregnancy they may also become aggressive and begin to protect nesting areas or stuffed toys at the approximate time when the puppies would have been born. Once the puppies are weaned and the dog is spayed the problem is unlikely to recur. In the interim, the owner can use a leash or leash and head collar, along with the come command and rewards to teach the dog to leave the litter, at which time the puppies can then be handled. With desensitization, counter-conditioning, good control, and highly motivating rewards, it may be possible to train your dog to accept approach and handling of the puppies.

<http://www.sniksnak.com/doghealth/aggression4.html>

The Service Project: Organization

Elyse Conway and Casey Macalush

Mission Statement

DAGGER is an organization that wants to give animals in shelters a second chance. Many dogs that are surrendered to shelters for aggressive behavior can be trained appropriately to live happily in a home as a wonderful family companion. The goal of The Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers Program is to target aggressive dogs, mainly shelter dogs, and train them to be loyal, safe pets through professional training and student participation in hopes to reduce the number of dogs euthanized in shelters each year.

Description of the Program

Rutgers University and Student Participation

The general program format is to start a Rutgers University managed program in which students can participate in the program for credits towards experience based education. The program is aimed to take place on campus under the supervision and management of at least one professional dog trainer.

The program will be offered to School of Environmental and Biological Science sophomore and older students for credits ranging from 1-3 credits. Animal science, companion animal science, pre-veterinary medicine majors will be chosen as priority for program participation. Each student must fulfill 3 hours a week per credit as followed with the animal science research program. The students will pay for the credits as registered and will be graded on their participation and credit fulfillment. This is an opportunity for students to gain experience with companion animals while earning credits towards their degrees.

The students assume all responsibility for injury and assume all liability. Each student will be required to complete a liability form in co-ordinance with the Rutgers University animal clearance waiver. The liability forms will waive all responsibility of Rutgers University. The students understand the dangers working with aggressive animals and will be trained by professionals before participating. All measures will be taken to protect the student from danger and injury.

Description of Classes

Professional dog trainers will be responsible for the overall aggressive dog training courses that will be broken down into 4 different types of aggressive behaviors that are common to shelter dogs due to their unfortunate lifestyles.

Fear Aggression

Food Aggression

Territory Aggression

Dominance Aggression

The main focus of these classes is to train away the types of aggression in shelter dogs as well as train them to respond differently than aggressiveness when a stimulus causes them to react in an aggressive manner. The program is an 8 week program in which the first 4 weeks each dog is given independent training classes with a one on one consult with the professional trainer for 1 hour and 15 minutes. This allows the trainer to identify the issues that trigger fear aggression and help the owner to understand how to manage the aggressive behavior and minimize it. After the 4 week independent classes, if the trainer feels as though the dog is able to get along with other dogs safely, the dog will participate in the last 4 weeks of a class of no more than 10 dogs with fear aggression. This will allow the owners to work together on the same issue with other owners who experience the same behavior problems.

Costs

Students will be responsible for organizing 2 fundraising event of their choice each semester to raise money for the program. Also, other types of fundraising and ideally donors will help to keep the program at a low cost to the potential shelter dog owners as an incentive to adopt the aggressive dogs.

Being that students will be paying for credits for the program, we hope to get a stipend from Rutgers University from that money that the students pay to participate in order to keep the program at a low cost.

The programs will be offered to potential shelter dog owners at a low class fee in order to cover the fees of the professional dog trainer and location of the program.

The professional dog trainer as the supervisor is the main cost of the program. These costs are still being researched and we will soon have exact numbers of costs. We also plan to cover the costs of the dog trainer's liability and insurance in order to ensure their safety. The cost of the trainer is also dependent on the number of trainers needed.

Benefits of the Program

The goal of The Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers Program is to attempt to increase adoption rates of dogs in shelters, getting them to good homes and owners who are willing to work with them for who they are. In turn we hope to reduce the euthanasia rate in shelters by having a behavior program that helps to alleviate the aggressive behavior many dogs have due to shelter life. The program also benefits Rutgers University students in that they will be provided an opportunity to participate in a small animal learning experience on campus in a field yet to be offered on campus.

Forms and Contracts Attached- Sarah Lipari and Nicole Rivas

DAGgER

Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers Training Program Training Program Enrollment

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

CANINE INFORMATION

Dog's Name _____ Sex _____

SPAYED / NEUTERED Y N Age _____ Breed _____

Please attach certificates of vaccination to this form

CLASS Registration

_____ Food Aggression

_____ Territory Aggression

_____ Fear Aggression

_____ Dominance Aggression

Space in any class will be reserved until full payment is received. Make all checks payable to DAGgER Training Program.

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Paid: _____ Check# _____ Cash _____

Adoption Discount _____ Total Charge \$ _____

DAGgER

Liability Waiver and Release

I understand that my participation in any of the DAGgER- Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers University aggressive dog training classes includes an element of risk for myself, attending family members/guests and my dog, which includes, without limitation, risks of illness, falls, bites and injury through contact with other participants, their dogs, or interior/exterior surroundings of any facility where training takes place.

I understand that participation by myself, attending family members/guests, and my dog is voluntary and that each person hereby expressly agrees to hold DAGgER, Rutgers University and its employees, owners and agents harmless from any liability whatsoever resulting from any injuries or damages sustained as a result of participation in the training, despite such liability may arise out of negligence or carelessness on the part of the persons named in this Waiver and Release.

I, and attending family members/guests, individual, and on behalf of their respective heirs, assigns or successors, hereby expressly waives, releases and discharges the Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers training program and its employees, owners and agents from any claims, demands, injuries, damages or causes of action that are in any way related to participation in the training, even though such liability may arise out of negligence or carelessness on the part of the persons named in this Waiver and Release.

The Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers Program makes no representations, guarantees or promises, implied or expressed, that any training received from

The Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers training program will not cure a dog of any dangerous tendencies. It is fully understood that regardless of the training received by the animal,

a dog always possesses the possibility to bite or cause other harm. I hereby agree to hold harmless DAggER, its employees, owners, and agents from any and all claims, or claims by any member of my family or any other person while on the grounds of any facility where training takes place, the surrounding area thereto, or on my own property or in a public area as a result of any action by any dog, including my own.

I affirm and have proof that my dog is current on all vaccinations appropriate for my dog. I agree to abide by all rules presented during the training.

I also understand that Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers training program may use for publicity pictures of my dog or me for promotional purposes without liability or obligation to me.

Signature

Print Name

Date _____

Participant's signature (MUST be at least 18 years of age)

Page 2 of 2 Initial _____

DAggER

Dog Aggression Elimination at Rutgers University Training Program Contract

The fee for the training program is payable in advance. Make checks payable to DAggER. After the third class session begins, no refunds will be made. Participants must pre-register and pay the class fee to reserve a space in the program.

DAggER reserves the right to cancel or postpone any class prior to the start date that has insufficient enrollment as determined by the trainer. If class is cancelled or postponed clients will be given the option to roll over their enrollment or cancel and receive a full refund.

All dogs must be vaccinated appropriately for their age, including: Distemper/Parvovirus, Rabies, and Bordetella (within the last 6 months). Proof of vaccination must be submitted prior to the class.

We reserve the right to refuse admittance if limitations of the handler or dog impair the ability of the trainer to teach the methods employed in the class.

We will make reasonable accommodations to assure a successful class experience. All actions will be taken to minimize dangerous situations and protect the owners, dogs, trainers and all other participants.

If, at any time, the trainer judges that a dog or handler is jeopardizing the safety of people or other dogs in the class, the trainer may request that the dog be removed from the class. The dog will then be given an opportunity for the remainder of the classes to be with the trainer alone. All dogs must be kept on a leash at all times for the protection of all participants.

Minors (under 18 years of age) who wish to train the dog may do so only with the authorization of a parent or legal guardian and at the trainer's discretion. No minor may hold a dog's leash without adult supervision.

Children who attend class with parents must be supervised by an adult and kept under control. If at any time the trainer judges that a child or children are jeopardizing the safety of people or other dogs in the class or are causing a disruption for other people in the class, the trainer may request that the children be removed from the class.

Page 1 of 2 Initial _____

Dogs must enter the building on leash and remain under their handler's control at all times!

All participants must complete and return a Liability Waiver and Release form.

When you arrive to class, you will be asked to sign in. Your signature will assert that you have read this contract and the Liability Waiver and Release and that you agree to abide by the rules and regulations DAggER dog training program.

Signature _____ Date _____
Printed _____

Names of other participants

1 _____	Age _____
2 _____	Age _____
3 _____	Age _____

Page 2 of 2 Initial _____

Resources

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Editorials

Elyse Conway
201-965-9504
Cook College (S.E.B.S) class of 2011

Dog Training Programs Could Lessen Yearly Euthanasia's in Local Shelters

As a Cook College student majoring in Animal Science I am around animals on a daily basis, and it of course makes me wish that I had a puppy to come home to and curl up with at the end of the day. After having the experience of being a veterinary technician, and working with animals regularly, I fully understand the responsibility, time, and money that it takes to properly train and care for a dog. The reality of it is that as a college student I do not have the time to care for a dog properly. This is a reality that many people, college students and the general public included, are not willing to accept and it ends up putting many animals into shelters for no good reason. People that do not have the time to properly train a dog, should not own one.

According to the ASPCA, 5 million to 7 million companion animals enter shelters nationwide every year. 3 to 4 million of these animals are euthanized; 60% of dogs and 70% of cats. These animals are euthanized for reasons such as illness, injury, old age, or aggression. The aggressive dogs are the hardest to place in new homes because many people do not feel that they can retrain an aggressive animal. The availability of training programs for aggressive dogs is very slim, and needs more focus and energy put in to it. If shelters were able to take these aggressive dogs to a training program to correct their bad behavior and redirect their aggression toward something useful, such as new tricks and commands, these dogs would be more likely to be placed into new homes instead of being euthanized. People also need to understand that all aggressive dogs

cannot be corrected the same way or treated the same way for the behavior. There are many different types of aggression such as dominate aggression, fear aggression, punishment aggression, pain aggression etc. A training program designed around dogs with behavioral problems would be able to tend to the individual needs of each different type of aggression and situation. This would help to lessen the number of dogs that need to be put in shelters in the first place because people would have another option for working with their troubled dog, as well as help to get more dogs adopted out of shelters once they have completed the training program.

If it would be at all possible, I feel that with the help of a supervisor and strong-willed students, Rutgers could take a leading role in starting a program to correct aggressive behaviors in dogs that are in shelters or may be sent to shelters. In the end, it could make a dramatic difference in the amount of animals that need to be euthanized each year by local shelters just because of a lack of training.

Puppies USA,

Hi my name is Nicole Rivas and Puppies USA really does an amazing job at preparing perspective dog owners on ways to care for the new additions to their families. I really like that your magazine focuses on ways to care for new puppies, not only by highlighting daily care, but also stressing the training needed for a well mannered puppy. I also really like that you advocate getting mixed breed puppies and how they can be equally great pets as pure breed puppies. I would like it if your magazine would also please place some importance on dogs in shelters. This would let perspective owners know that there are amazing and friendly dogs in shelters all across the United States that would be fantastic companions.

There are between 4,000 and 6,000 animal shelters in the United States. The number of cats and dogs entering those shelters each year is roughly 6-8 million. The total number of cats and dogs euthanized by shelters annually is 3-4 million! If more of the potential pet owners that read your magazine are informed about shelter dogs and the benefits of adoption, I feel that the number of unwanted and unnecessary euthanasia would dramatically decrease.

I am a senior at Rutgers University and as part of an enriching class called Ethics in Science we are suppose to go out and help the community in some way that matters most to us. I chose to start a training program at Rutgers for shelter dogs in order to try to help the new owners bond with their new additions and help shelter dogs keep their homes for life. If the dogs that are adopted are well mannered, which only requires some training, they are more likely to remain in good homes for the duration of their lives. I really hope that with your help and the new program beginning at Rutgers we can help more amazing dogs find permanent loving homes.

Sincerely,

Nicole Rivas

Casey Macalush
2 Woodbridge Avenue Apt. B07
Highland Park, NJ 08904
cmacalus@eden.rutgers.edu

November 3, 2010

Bark Back, Dog Fancy
P.O Box 6050
Mission Viejo, CA 92690-6050

Sometimes in life, all you need is a dog, especially as a college student. I have to use every ounce of energy in my body to not go to an animal shelter to prevent myself from getting sucked into a helpless puppy dog's eyes and taking one home. Some nights the books may be open until 4 am and the days may be 12 hours until I see my apartment again, I understand that I am in no way capable of caring for a companion even with 6 years of experience as a veterinary technician. Animals require a lot of time and patience, something that I believe all animal owners should acknowledge.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, 63% of households in the United States have a pet; 75 million of these pets are dogs. Yet the unfortunate reality is that millions of companion animals are surrendered to shelters each year. One very important reason for abandonment is an aggressive animal. There are many reasons why an animal may be aggressive; it may not just be the nature of the animal. Issues such as fear, dominance, territorial and many others may be the root to your dog's aggression, yet all of these aspects can be monitored and redirected to the behaviors you desire your companion canine to have.

I enjoyed reading the December 2010 issue article, "Training an Abused Dog," the aspect of controlling situations in which your dog is uncomfortable through progress and work from the owner based on their personal experiences with a certain animal. The issue is determining the triggers in which promote certain reactions and helping to decrease negative cues.

I found this article very interesting because it addresses the issue of owners dealing with their animal's fears and aggression on a case by case basis. I believe availability of knowledge, professional help and training programs can help companion animal owners with aggressive dogs to ease issues through time and effort. I am very passionate that with proper education, time, and effort an aggressive animal can be trained to be a wonderful companion and the shelter rate of companion dogs can be minimized greatly. A well trained dog is a happy companion.

Thank you for your time,
Casey Macalush

Parade Magazine,

I wanted to thank you guys so much for your August 2010 issue on Michael Vick's pit bulls. After that incident, the pit bull name was destroyed. Personally owning two pit-mixes myself, I have had friends that were nervous in front of my two tail-wagging, happy pups. It broke my heart to walk into a shelter and find the place ridden with pit bulls because people are too afraid to own them. I truly hope that your nation-wide issue has put a light on the truth

behind pit bulls, and any dog for that matter: that the behavior lies in the hands of the trainers/owners.

I am a senior at Rutgers University, taking an enlightening class where we have to make a difference on a matter that motivates us. Your article has such a big impact on our topic. We are trying to start a training program at Rutgers for older shelter dogs in order to find a forever-home. Your article shows that the truth lies in the training, and how it is not a breed-specific flaw, but lack of training.

Again, thank you for shining a positive light on the sweet nature of these misunderstood pit bulls. I am sure you have swayed the opinion of many in the nation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Lipari